



**Testimony
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Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST)
Before the
Planning & Development Committee
March 5, 2010**

SB-301 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE SMALL TOWN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) supports the intent of SB-301 to open up the Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) to regional municipal economic development efforts.

Recognizing that Connecticut's suburban and rural towns – communities under 30,000 in population - play a vital role in the state's economic, social and cultural wellbeing. COST successfully spearheaded efforts in 2002 to win passage of legislation establishing the STEAP program.

Since its creation, STEAP has provided small towns with \$20 million annually in critically needed assistance with which to undertake important economic development projects – projects that improve both their economic development infrastructure and quality of life. Prior to the establishment of STEAP, small towns had access to very few resources with which to undertake important infrastructure improvements and economic development projects. These projects help spur economic development throughout the state.

However, in 2004, the Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials tried to obtain funding under STEAP to move forward with a multi town project to benefit the Towns of Barkhamsted, Colebrook, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Litchfield, Morris, New Hartford, and Norfolk. Unfortunately, STEAP funding could not be used for the project because it is limited to towns.

We therefore support SB-301, which is a common sense, voluntary way of encouraging regionalism to benefit our small towns.

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